

Nevada GEAR UP

**Gaining Early Awareness and
Readiness for Undergraduate Programs**

Fourth Year Evaluation Report

Executive Summary

2009-10

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NEVADA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Special Education, Elementary and Secondary
Education, and School Improvement Programs

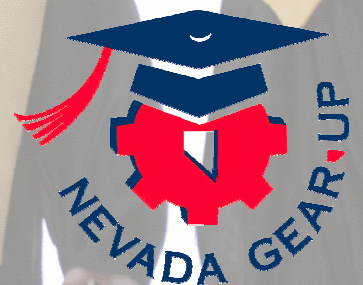
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Executive Summary

The goal of Nevada GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) is to help more low-income students become prepared academically and financially to enter into and succeed in college. Nevada GEAR UP provides funding to assist partnerships of high-poverty middle and high schools, community-based organizations, private industry, and institutions of higher education to help students and their parents learn about college. The partnerships provide enhanced research-based curriculum, tutoring, summer and after-school academic and enrichment programs, mentoring, teacher professional development, and college visits.

Nevada GEAR UP is operated by the Nevada Department of Education in conjunction with the Nevada Office of the Governor, the Nevada Office of the State Treasurer, and the Nevada System of Higher Education. Nevada GEAR UP targeted 7th grade students in 20 middle schools during 2006-07, all with a poverty level of at least 60 percent. Nine schools are from Clark County School District, three schools are from Nye County, three schools are from Washoe County, and one school each from Elko, Esmeralda, Humboldt, Mineral, and Pershing County School Districts. GEAR UP services will follow this 7th grade cohort of students as they proceed through their school career—from 7th to 8th grade, from 8th to 9th grade, and so on.

The Nevada GEAR UP program is guided by three goals:

1. GEAR UP students will improve their academic achievement.
2. GEAR UP middle school structures and teacher beliefs will support and encourage students to succeed in high school and go on to college.
3. GEAR UP students will enroll in and succeed in college.

The purpose of this report is to describe the Nevada GEAR UP program in 2009-10 and the students and parents it serves, and to report the results of data collected on the three program goals. The following pages provide a list of the key findings, followed by the overall conclusions.

Summary of Key Findings

Characteristics of GEAR UP Students

1. The GEAR UP program served 4,626 students during the 2009-10 school year across 30 schools in seven school districts.
2. The GEAR UP student cohort is comprised primarily of minority students at 74 percent. The two largest subgroups are Hispanic students at 52 percent and White students at 27 percent.
3. Eleven percent of the GEAR UP student population is Limited English Proficient, compared to 16 percent statewide. About 10 percent of the GEAR UP student population have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), consistent with the percent of IEP students statewide. Forty-seven percent of the GEAR UP student population were reported to participate in the Free and Reduced Lunch Program, as compared to 42 percent statewide.

Student Participation in Services (A total of 4,581 of the 4,626 students (99 percent) in the database participated in at least one GEAR UP activity and, on average, spent 123 hours in GEAR UP activities.)

4. Overall, the largest number of students attended the service in which they would learn about college, i.e., counseling, advising, academic planning, and career counseling.
5. Over two thousand students (n=2,230) spent the greatest average amount of time (169 hours) in services (i.e., rigorous academic credit) that will help prepare them to succeed in high school, and perhaps, enroll in college.

Parent Participation in Services (A total of 4,941 parents/guardians who represented 3,523 of the 4,626 active students in the program participated in at least one GEAR UP activity and, on average, spent 1.7 hours in GEAR UP activities.)

6. The GEAR UP activity that reached the greatest number of parents was “counseling/advising about college enrollment” activities, which typically referred to contacting parents and distributing GEAR UP informational materials to them. Primarily, these activities were designed to help parents learn more about the GEAR UP program and college opportunities.
7. Parents spent the greatest amount of time participating in college visits (13 hours); however, only the parents of 57 students participated in these activities. Schools estimated that parents spent an average of 1.1 hours in “counseling/advising about college enrollment,” the activity in which the greatest number of parents participated.

Student Survey Results (Based on a matched group of students (n=2,914) who completed a survey when they were in grade 7 in 2006-07 and in grade 10 in 2009-10.)

8. Student survey results suggest that the majority of GEAR UP students continue to believe that they are “good” to “excellent” students and spend about one to three hours, or less, on homework per week.
9. Student survey results show that a majority of students still obtain their information about continuing their education after high school from their parents, but that students are starting to receive more information from school staff, especially from GEAR UP staff. Most students continue to think they will obtain a Bachelor’s Degree. However, it appears that there has been a slight decrease in the percent of students who believe that they will continue their education after high school, primarily due to finances.
10. Student survey results suggest that more students learned about college entrance requirements and college finances from 2006-07 to 2009-10. The results also show that most students continue to believe that getting an education after high school is important to their future. However, while most students continue to believe that they can afford to attend a four-year college, the percentage decreased from 69 percent in 2006-07 to 59 percent in 2009-10.
11. Student survey results show that a little over 50 percent of students had talked to their parents about the academic requirements for attending college in both 2006-07 and 2009-10. However, a larger percent of students spoke to someone at school in 2009-10 (56 percent) than in 2006-07 (44 percent).
12. Student survey results show a very large percent of students continue to be “satisfied” to “very satisfied” with GEAR UP services, but there is a consistent change with those two categories. That is, a smaller percent of students are “very satisfied” and a larger percent of students are “satisfied” with each service. The results also show an increase in the percent of students who have changed their plans about attending college from 2006-07 to 2009-10 because of GEAR UP. More students now plan to attend college because of GEAR UP.

Parent Survey Results (Based on parents who completed a survey in 2006-07 (n=446), 2007-08 (n=3,101), 2008-09 (n=3,558), and 2009-10 (n=3,144).)

13. Parent survey results show that most parents view their children as “good” or “excellent” students, and report that their children spend about one to three hours on homework each week. The large majority of parents in 2009-10 have not talked to their child’s counselor about high school graduation requirements, but more than in 2006-07. Parents continue to report that they do not have enough information about college preparation.
14. Parent survey results show that most parents think their children will obtain a college degree, even though the percent decreased from 67 percent in 2006-07 to 61

- percent in 2009-10. The primary reason why parents think their children would not continue their education after high school is the cost of college, changing from 18 percent in 2006-07 to 24 percent in 2009-10.
15. Parent survey results show that while more parents report that school staff have spoken to them about college entrance requirements and about the availability of college financial aid in 2008-09 and 2009-10 when their children entered high school than previously, over half have not. Most parents have not visited college campuses with their child, but most parents have talked to their child about attending college. The results also show, overall, that most parents think their child will be able to afford to attend college.
 16. While most parents have not attended any GEAR UP events, they are satisfied with the GEAR UP program.

GEAR UP Indicators

17. The percent of GEAR UP students who had a signed GEAR UP Parent Contract increased substantially from 36 percent in 2006-07, to 70 percent in 2007-08, to 71 percent in 2008-09, and then to 81 percent in 2009-10. However, the percent of signed Parent Contracts is still below the benchmark of 90 percent.
18. Student survey results show that while the largest percent of students continue to believe that they will obtain a Bachelor's Degree or higher, the percent decreases from 71 percent in 2006-07 to 67 percent in 2009-10. In addition, a greater percent of students think they will attend some college but obtain less than a Bachelor's Degree, from 22 percent in 2006-07 to 27 percent in 2009-10.
19. Parent survey results show that the largest percent of parents continue to believe that their children will obtain a Bachelor's Degree or higher, but the percent decreased from 67 percent in 2006-07 to 61 percent in 2009-10.
20. The results show a slight increase in the percent of students at or above grade level in English and math from 2006-07 to 2007-08, when the students were in middle school. But, student performance decreased in 2008-09 and again in 2009-10 when the students were in high school. That is, the percent of students at or above grade level in English decreased from 71 percent in 2007-08, to 66 percent in 2008-09, and to 64 percent in 2009-10. In math, the percent of students at or above grade level decreased from 64 percent in 2007-08 to 60 percent in 2008-09, and to 56 percent in 2009-10.
21. The GEAR UP student cohort achieved an end-of-year Grade Point Average (GPA) of 2.48 in 2006-07, 2.46 in 2007-08, 2.28 in 2008-09, and 2.29 in 2009-10.
22. The percent of GEAR UP students who had an unweighted GPA of 2.0 or above at the end of the 2008-09 and 2009-10, eligible for a GEAR UP Scholarship, remained the same at about 65 percent.

23. The results show that GEAR UP student performance on the High School Proficiency Examinations is consistent with all the students at the GEAR UP schools for reading, math, and science. The performance of GEAR UP students is also similar to the performance of students statewide for reading, but below the performance of students statewide in math and science.
24. The results show that GEAR UP students had an average of 6.4 high school credits at the end of 2008-09 and 12.1 credits at the end of the 2009-10. In addition, 71 percent of GEAR UP students had at least six credits in 2008-09 and 64 percent had at least 12 credits in 2009-10, and are “on track” to having the required number of credits to graduate from high school in 2009-10. While the percent of students who are on track to graduate from high school decreased from 2008-09 to 2009-10, the small decrease is probably typical given the number of high school credits that some students receive when still in middle school.
25. The PSAT results show that Nevada GEAR UP students scored lower than students statewide and students nationally in reading, math, and science, as might be expected given the composition of GEAR UP students and the large percent of the GEAR UP student cohort who took the assessment.
26. The PLAN results show that Nevada GEAR UP students scored about the same as students statewide, but below students nationally on English, reading, math, and science.
27. The PLAN results also show that the percentage of Nevada GEAR UP students who are “on track” to being college-ready are about the same as the percentage of students statewide. Both percentages, however, are substantially below the percentage of students who are “on track” to being college-ready nationally.

Conclusions

1. The Nevada Department of Education targeted GEAR UP funds to those schools with student populations typically underrepresented at college, i.e., lower-income minority students. In other words, the program targeted those students who can benefit from GEAR UP information and activities to help them enroll in college.
2. Many students in the Nevada GEAR UP student cohort and their parents already had aspirations prior to GEAR UP for the student to enroll in college and earn a degree. However, the data suggest that GEAR UP may have encouraged even more students to set aspirations for college enrollment.
3. GEAR UP has probably made parents and students more aware of college enrollment requirements, college financial aid opportunities, and the importance of continuing education after high school from the information and services provided to them.

4. Parents and students perceive that students are performing well in school even though they both think the students are not spending much time on homework and the available evidence shows that GEAR UP students are performing below their peers on state and national assessments. Overall, the data suggest that students and parents have the expectation for college enrollment, but some students lack the academic achievement and some strategies to enter college and be successful.
5. Many GEAR UP students have received the academic services needed to succeed in high school and go on to college. However, many of the services have been provided to students within their traditional high school program, making it difficult to assess the clear value added by GEAR UP to a student's academic preparation for college.
6. In general, the performance of GEAR UP students on state and national assessments is consistent with what students at the GEAR UP schools have performed historically, making it difficult to determine if GEAR UP has had an appreciable effect on student academic success.
7. Ultimately, GEAR UP may have an important positive impact on whether students go on to college because of the scholarships that the program provides to students. Without financial assistance, a growing number of GEAR UP students who want to attend college would not have the opportunity. GEAR UP will provide those students with the funds to go to college.